NUMB. I.

The Prompter.

To be Continued TUESDAYS and FRIDAYS.

—— All the *World*'s a *Stage*,
And all the *Men* and *Women*, merely *Players*. Shakeſp.

—— *When we daily ſee ſo many Men* ACT *amiſs, can we entertain any Doubt that a good* PROMPTER *is wanting?*

See below.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 12. 1734.

CUSTOM has made it neceſſary for a Writer, who aims at the Entertainment or Inſtruction of his Readers, (I mean in this humble Half-ſheet way) to aſſume a *Character*, either illuſtrious or obſcure, either heroic or ludicrous; [illegible] to expreſs the common Intention better, ſuch a Character as is moſt able to excite Curioſity, raiſe Mirth, and procure Attention. So that a modern Author, like an ancient Pilgrim, as ſoon as he ſets out, muſt take up ſome *Sobriquet*, or mock Name, if he hopes to come quietly to the End of his Journey.

CONVINCED of this, before I ſat down to form Leſſons for the Publick, I ſpent ſome time in Search of a Title to appear under: But ſo many have travell'd before me in this Road, that I found it almoſt impoſſible to fix upon one, which I might properly call my own. I believe it muſt occur to the Memory of every Reader, that even the Subjects, which furniſh theſe kinds of Eſſays, are not more exhauſted, than the Titles, which adorn them.

I LAY long under this Difficulty; and indeed it was ſo heavy, that I had for ſome time almoſt laid aſide my Purpoſe; till at length, my Love for Theatrical Entertainments, which frequently led me to the Playhouſes, gave me an Opportunity of extricating my ſelf. In one of my Walks behind the Scenes, while I had this Matter full in my Head, I obſerved, an humble, but uſeful Officer, ſtanding in a Corner, and attentively peruſing a Book, which lay before him; he never forſook his Poſt, but, like a General in the Field, had many *Aid de Camps* about him, whom he diſpatched with his Orders; and I could perceive, that tho' he ſeemed not to command, yet all his Inſtructions were punctually complied with, and that in the modeſt Character of an Adviſer, he had the whole Management, and Direction of that little Commonwealth. I enquired into his Name and Office, and was inform'd, that he was THE PROMPTER.

I BLEST my Stars for my fortunate Curioſity. We have had, ſaid I to my ſelf, *Dictators* and *Cenſors*, *Monitors* and [illegible] Names that carry Preſumption and Arrogance in the Sound of them. But ſince the Analogy is in all Reſpects ſo cloſe between the Stage and the World; what Character is ſo proper, ſo modeſt, ſo pertinent, for an humble Adviſer, as THE PROMPTER?

BUT in order to give my Readers a higher Idea of the *Dignity* of this Character, I muſt take the Liberty of being a little more particular in the Deſcription of his Office; and when I have ſhewn them, that he, without ever appearing on the Stage himſelf, has ſome Influence over every thing, that is tranſacted upon it, I doubt not, but they will all agree with *Cato*, that *the Poſt of Honour is a private Station.*

TO proceed then, He ſtands in a Corner, unſeen and unobſerved by the Audience, but diligently attended to by every one, who plays a Part; yet, tho' he finds them all very obſervant of him, he preſumes nothing upon his own Capacity; he has a Book before him, from which he delivers his Advice and Inſtructions. From this Part of his Conduct, a very good Moral is to be drawn, which, I hope, I ſhall never be ſo forgetful of, as to be accuſed of *talking without Book.*

HE takes particular Care, not only to ſupply thoſe, that are *out* in their Parts, with Hints and Directions, proper to ſet them right; but alſo, by way of Caution, drops Words to thoſe, who are perfect,

perfect, with an Intention to keep them from going wrong. I have often obſerved the moſt expert and couragious Generals tremble thro' Fear of miſſing his Inſtructions, and the wiſeſt of Monarchs lend him an attentive Ear. I have ſeen the merrieſt of Mortals not dare to crack a Joke, till he gave them the *Cue*, and the moſt deſpairing of Lovers refrain from Sighs and Tears, till they had his Permiſſion to be miſerable. I have ſeen a diſcontented Stateſman huſh Sedition, at his Nod; and a very habile Prime Miniſter, not able to pay Penſions without his Advice and Concurrence. In ſhort, I have ſeen ſo much, that I ſhall not heſitate to pronounce him, A Director of the Ignorant, a Comforter of the Afflicted, a Terror to the Evil Actor, and a *Counſellor to the Counſellors of Kings*.

I HAVE already taken notice of the Scouts, and Meſſengers, which attend him; by diſpatching one of theſe, he can, at a Minute's Warning, bring the greateſt Characters of Antiquity, or the pleaſanteſt of the preſent times, upon the Stage, for the Improvement or Diverſion of the Audience. I mention this here again, becauſe 'tis a Part of his Conduct, which I intend ſtrictly to imitate.

AMONG his *Inſtrumenta Regni*, his Implements of Government, I have taken particular Notice of a little Bell, which hangs over his Arm: By the Tinkling of this Bell, if a Lady in Tragedy be in the Spleen for the Abſence of her Lover, or a Hero in the Dumps for the Loſs of a Battle, he can conjure up ſoft Muſick to ſooth their Diſtreſs; nay, if a Wedding happens in a Comedy, he can ſummon up the Fidlers to diſpel *Care* by a Country Dance. I muſt inform my Readers, that I have procured an emblematical Bell for theſe Purpoſes, and that whenever any of theſe Misfortunes ſhall befal them, I can call up a muſical Spirit of Chearfulneſs, and make them as *merry*, as is conſiſtent with the old *Proverb*.

ANOTHER Tool of his Authority is a Whittle, which hangs about his Neck: This is an Inſtrument of great Uſe and Significance: I won't ſay but the Sound of a Boatſwain's Whiſtle may be ſometimes more terrible; but I am ſure, it cannot be more punctually obeyed. Dr. *Fauſtus*'s celebrated Wand has not a more arbitrary and extenſive Power, than this muſical Machine: At the leaſt Blaſt of it, I have ſeen Houſes move, as it were, upon Wings, Cities turned into Foreſts, and dreary Deſarts converted into ſuperb Palaces: I have ſeen an Audience removed, in a Moment, from *Britain* to *Japan*, and the frozen Mountains of *Zembla* reſembling the ſunny Vales of *Arabia Fœlix*: I have ſeen Heaven and Earth paſs away, and Chaos enſue, and from thence a new Creation ariſe, fair and blooming, as the Poet's Fancy; and all by the powerful magic Influence of this Wond working Whiſtle. No body will be ſurprized, af this, to hear, that I have made uſe of all my In reſt, to procure from the ingenious Mr. *Chetwo* an atteſted Copy of this marvellous Inſtrument, virtue of which, and ſome Directions from th eminent *Adept*, I ſhall be able to preſent my Readers with a never-failing Variety of Objects.

THUS qualified, and fired by ſuch Examples, I enter, boldly, upon my Province. The Compariſ between the World and the Stage will hold in a Points: I could go thro' with it, if it were not too old to be repeated, as well as too certain to be doubted: Therefore, when we daily ſee ſo many Men *act* amiſs, can we entertain any Doubt, tha a good PROMPTER is wanting? I will do m beſt to make up for that Defect, by cloſely imitating that worthy Officer at the Play-houſe. I ſhall give the *Word* impartially to every *Performer*, from the Peaſant to the Prince, from the Milk-maid to her Majeſty; every Part, whether Male or Female, ſerious or humorous, high or low, ſhall be carefully and equally *prompted*.

NOR can I think it any Diſhonour, ſince th Stage has ſo long been tranſcribing the World, th the World ſhould now make Repriſals, and loo as freely into the *Theatres*. —— Let their *Manage* therefore be upon their Guard; and their *Dependents*, Tragic or Comic, take good heed to the Parts, ſince there is, from this Day forward, arile a PROMPTER, *without Doors*, who hath a *Cat-call*, as well as a *Whiſtle*; and, whenever the Players grow *flat*, will himſelf make bold to be *muſical*.

NOW if, after what I have ſaid, any of my Readers ſhould be ſtill of Opinion, that I have choſen too humble a Character, let them remember, that Travellers who go *incog.* may take v Appellation they pleaſe, and are never the worſe Company. Let me alſo inform them from Hiſto that a Prince of a Royal Houſe undertook a P grimage to *Jeruſalem*, under the humble Name o *Planta Geniſtæ* (which his illuſtrious Succeſſors afterwards aſſum'd for their Surname, and were proud to be called *Plantagenets*) that is, in plain *Engliſh*, neither better nor worſe than Mr. *Broomſtick*. I mention this, not without ſome Tincture of ſecret Pride: As I have the Honour to be a *Broomſtick* my ſelf, by Paternal Deſcent, from a *Stock* of immemorial Antiquity, tranſplanted from a *Mountain* in *Scotland*, at leaſt as ancient as *Ararat*. —— I wou'd have the *Great*, whom I may ſee Cauſe to *prompt* in their *Parts*, take due Notice of this, that they may know, I am *Gentleman* enough to be *wiſe* in Right of my *Anceſtors*, and not neglect my Inſtructions, as the good Senſe of an *Upſtart*, too obſcure to deſerve Notice.

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